



Downland Villages Ward : MSDC

Geoff Zeidler : Councillor's Report – 7th October 2025

MSDC Update

At the last MSDC Council meeting on 24th September the Council voted to support the establishment of a smaller Unitary authority comprising only Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex; rather than the whole of West Sussex which would be the second largest Unitary Authority in the UK. Under either option Council Tax is likely to rise by 10%. This smaller option would have £6m higher implementation costs and £30m lower savings which, at the “base case” of forecasts, would be negligible. It would require the disaggregation of Education; Health and Social Care; and Transport Services. Its benefits would be that it has a higher density of Councillors to residents and may be based more locally. The Government will consult on the options in November and make a decision, heavily influenced by the Treasury, in Q1 2026. The next MSDC Council meeting is 10th December.

At the Cabinet meeting on 15th September the Cabinet decided to progress Parking Charges for the villages. The papers did not analyse the financial case but only focused on the discount. The Council has failed to consult as it promised prior to preparing a Pricing Policy and a consultation will now occur a month before implementation in April 2026. I believe that the Cabinet has not fully engaged with or considered submissions from Parishes; and did not consider suggestions I had made about deferral if health and safety issues were not resolved. One Cabinet member noted that the technology options were not tested and that the plan was challenging.

Planning

Deadlock between MSDC and PINS on the District Plan remains; although the Council has taken some steps to protect its position. As MSDC currently has no 5 year land supply speculative development applications are being seen; and none of the Reg19 Policies carry weight in decisions. Generally housebuilding is slow and Brookleigh (Burgess Hill Northern Arc) is behind plan with the school development postponed.

MSDC are seeking to maintain the objectives of the “Sayers Village” Masterplan although the 4 smaller developments are all progressing. This is through co-ordination with Berkley and pressing for s106 requirements as the route to infrastructure funding. There was a second “Liaison Cttee” meeting with Albourne, Hurstpierpoint and Twineham Parishes hosted by MSDC on 6th October, and agreement to a continuing program of meetings to ensure progress (which appeared very limited since the meeting in May).

In the meantime I am invited to, and attend whenever possible, all the Pre-Application and Design Review meetings between the individual developers and MSDC so retain a perspective on progress.

Services

The 1-2-3 waste collection service is being rolled out in the next couple of months. This involved the provision of a food waste bin which is collected weekly; recycling is collected bi-weekly and other rubbish every third week.

Infrastructure

No significant changes to report.

WSSC

I have supported requests for a further review of the junction of Trusslers Hill Lane and the B2116 but WSSC reported that even a CHS application is likely to fail as there have been no police-attended incidents.



Parish Issues for DC Support

I have had confirmation that Sussex Police are no longer supporting the removal of abandoned vehicles via Operation Crackdown; and so the Council are having to identify routes to complete HPI and other ownership checks prior to removal. This is slowing response times.

Albourne (*Next meeting – 7th October*)

No currently active new issues.

Fulking (*9th October*)

Supporting continuing efforts at abandoned vehicle removal (LV53DUH)

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common (*23rd October*)

Berrylands Pond work is now being managed under the Flora & Fauna group with local volunteers. Requests for support for dredging were not accepted by MSDC. Consideration of tree management underway in association with residents.

Newtimber (*28th October*)

Unfortunately I was unable to make the last meeting when dates had moved.

Poynings (*6th November*)

No currently active new issues.

Pyecombe (*11th November*)

Unfortunately I was unable to make the last meeting due to a change of date.

Twineham (*10th November*)

Unfortunately I was unable to make the last meeting.